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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PORT AU PRINCE 000321

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [HA](#) [KDEM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#)

SUBJECT: FANMI LAVALAS: FOUR REGIONAL CONGRESSES HELD, SIX  
TO GO

REF: A. 07 PORT AU PRINCE 1898

[1](#)B. PORT AU PRINCE 293

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Classified By: DCM Thomas C. Tighe for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1.(SBU) SUMMARY: Striving for increased political legitimacy in anticipation of prospective senatorial elections, the pro-Aristide party Fanmi Lavalas (FL) held its fourth of ten scheduled regional congresses in the South Department on February 16. Reports claim five thousand FL partisans, including high profile FL leadership, attended this congress organized by senatorial hopeful Francky Exeus. The main themes of these congresses, the messianic return of former President Jean Bertrand Aristide and party restructuring, have remained unchanged. The increasing cost of living has, however, strengthened the FL rallying call for Aristide's return. FL intends to have the ten congresses culminate in a national congress where a party leader will be officially elected in Aristide's continued absence. No concrete plans have yet been drawn for the fifth regional congress. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Poloff met with FL leader and Senator, Rudy Heriveaux on February 21 (Note: Heriveaux is viewed by some factions of the party as the official party leader. He is the party's most visible and politically connected GOH official. End note.) Heriveaux informed Poloff that FL held its fourth successful congress in the city of Cayes in the South Department on February 16. According to Heriveaux, approximately five thousand FL partisans attended the congress, organized by FL senatorial hopeful Francky Exeus. (Note: Francky Exeus is a former Deputy of the South Department and currently works for the GOH Ministry of the Interior as a ministry liaison to parliament. End note.) Heriveaux claimed the congress was funded by donations from all elected FL affiliated officials and private sympathizers from the Haitian diaspora.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Heriveaux stated that the congresses will serve as a forum to collectively restructure party leadership, showcase the party's mobilizing prowess, and for Senate primary elections for FL candidates from the various departments. Prominent FL partisans in attendance at this fourth congress included Deputy Jonas Coffy (former chairman of the lower house of parliament's finance committee), Jacques Matellier (member of the Aristide elected FL Executive Committee), and Gerard Jean Juste (former Catholic Priest and prominent Aristide ally).

[1](#)4. (C) According to Senator Heriveaux, Jean Juste had a

special reason for attending this fourth congress. Given free reign to address the Lavalasian partisans, Heriveaux claimed Jean Juste informed them that the election of Jacob Zuma to the head of the African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa on December 18, 2007 had jeopardized the possibility of Aristide's continued residence in South Africa. According to Jean Juste, if Zuma were subsequently elected president of South Africa in 2009, Aristide would no longer be welcome in South Africa. He also claimed Jean Juste told the partisans that he believes President Bush has washed his hands clean of Aristide and would not contest a future return to Haiti. Heriveaux claimed that Jean Juste then implored FL to mobilize expeditiously to ensure victory at prospective senatorial elections and guarantee Aristide's return to Haiti.

15. (C) Also permitted to address the partisans at this congress were four FL senatorial hopefuls-Yvon Feuille (former Lavalas Senator for the South Department under the last Aristide regime), Francky Exeus, Louis Paul and Jacques Matelier. FL Deputy Sorel Francois (protect accordingly) stated to Poloff on February 21 that contrary to most expectations, FL partisans showed the most support for Yvon Feuille as opposed to Francky Exeus. Deputy Francois revealed that based on Yvon Feuille's perceived popularity at this congress, FL leadership was considering endorsing Feuille and reneging on their previous unofficial and back-door deal to endorse Exeus as their candidate for the South Department.

16. (SBU) Heriveaux claimed that FL had no definite plans for the fifth regional congress nor had they selected where to have it. Funding remained a problem. He admitted holding a congress in the West Department would be a difficult proposition given the multitude of potential candidates and the struggle for FL party leadership within the department.

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However, he opined that with the success of the previous three congresses, the first held in the North Department on November 24 (ref A), the second in the Center Department on December 11, and the third in Department of Nippes on December 24, FL will continue holding its regional congresses.

17. (C) Heriveaux noted to Poloff that FL leadership was strongly against the planned protest scheduled for February 29 by FL grass roots partisans (ref B). According to Heriveaux, FL leadership was compelled to throw their support behind the grass roots organizers for fear of losing popular support. With the prospect of senate elections looming, Heriveaux underscored that FL leadership has to maintain popular support among grass roots members, particularly given the expected fight for the senate seat in the North between FL hopeful Nawoon Marcellus and the Lespwa candidate Moise Jean Charles (septel).

18. (SBU) Comment: With all the major political parties jostling for political inclusion and control of the 30 member senate, FL is to date, the most visibly active, restructuring and mobilizing its partisan base for prospective senatorial elections. FL appears to be preaching the right doctrine to politically position itself for dominance. Party disorganization and the ideological differences between the educated and politically savvy leadership core and the grass roots partisans however remain an impediment to restructuring. The Preval administration's current ineffectiveness in curbing the increasing cost of living has given FL a strong lifeline. FL's perceived struggle to rectify the economic situation, albeit via organized protests or rallying calls for Aristide's return, may give the party added political legitimacy and may improve their chances in prospective senatorial elections.

SANDERSON